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DE RUEHJM #2200 3401553
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
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FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3460
INFO RUEHXK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 4418
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC PRIORITY

UNCLAS JERUSALEM 002200

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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE AND NEA/IPA; NSC FOR PASCUAL; TREASURY
FOR AHERN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: ECON PREL PGOV KWBG ETRD IS
SUBJECT: GOI PREPARES NEW CHECKPOINT IN NORTHERN WEST BANK

REF: JERUSALEM 1488

¶1. (SBU) Summary: The GOI has installed, but not yet manned, a new checkpoint northwest of Nablus, a few kilometers south of the Shavei Shomron checkpoint on Route 60. The new checkpoint, if operational, would add a restriction on the primary north-south highway within the West Bank that was eased when the Shavei Shomeron checkpoint was opened (reftel). It would also introduce an additional obstacle for travelers coming out of Nablus via Beit Iba on their way west and south. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) On December 4, Congenoffs visited a site on Route 60, northwest of Nablus (between the Shavei Shomeron checkpoint and Route 57), where Israeli security forces have installed new checkpoint infrastructure. The new installation is only a few kilometers south of the Shavei Shomeron checkpoint, just beyond the road leading to Nablus via Beit Iba. The checkpoint infrastructure appears to be complete. At the site Congenoffs observed two large road gates -- spaced about 75 yards apart -- with two armored guard shacks facing each other on both sides of the road between the gates. The gates were in an open position. There are no additional building materials or indicators to suggest the GOI is constructing additional infrastructure around the site. Local Palestinians told Congenoffs the checkpoint installation began on December 2.

¶3. (SBU) As of December 4, nearby Shavei Shomeron and Beit Iba checkpoints were functioning normally. (Shavei Shomeron is regularly open to freely flowing traffic twelve hours a day. Beit Iba remains one of the two major checkpoints limiting pedestrian and vehicle access in and out of Nablus.) The new checkpoint, if manned during daylight hours without changes to other area obstacles, would add a restriction on north-south travel on Route 60 previously eased by Shavei Shomeron's opening. It would control traffic flowing from Jenin to Tulkarm (including the Sha'ar Ephraim crossing) and Ramallah. The new site would also serve as a second barrier (after Beit Iba) for Palestinians traveling from Nablus to Tulkarm and Ramallah.

¶4. (SBU) A map of the location, along with photos from the December 4 visit, can be found on ConGen Jerusalem's unclassified intelink site at:
http://www.intelink.gov/communities/state/pal_econ.
WALLES